

MISC.

WORLD RECONSTRUCTION PAPERS—No. 10

Fields Still Unoccupied

By
S. M. ZWEMER

STUDENT VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT
25 Madison Avenue, New York

FIELDS STILL UNOCCUPIED

BY SAMUEL M. ZWEMER.

The Anglo-Saxons, some one has remarked, have always had of their number those who loved to creep on a little beyond the margin of the traveled world; men to whom beaten tracks were a burden and to whom "free air to the windward was ever more than new-found territory, however rich."

The return of hundreds of thousands of young men with university training from the battlefields of Europe after demobilization, has doubtless awakened in their hearts this very desire for a new venture. They have seen the glory of the impossible.

The search for the sources of the Nile, the penetration of Asia, and the attempts to discover the Poles are illustrations of this spirit. Returning from his expedition, and replying to a toast at the Royal Societies Club, Sir Ernest Shackelton voiced the sentiment of such hearts when he said: "When once men have been out beyond those parts of the world which are known to men, there is an indescribable call to their hearts to return—a call more appealing than that of London or of the pleasuries and luxuries of life." At the beginning of the twentieth century mis-

sions have made such rapid progress that there is an impression in some quarters that all doors are open, and that the problem of evangelization has become one of opportunism, simply depending on an adequate supply of men and means. The statement has even been made that Tibet is the one country to which the Christian missionary has not penetrated! But this is not the case.

In contemplating the unparalleled progress of the work of missions even before the War, still more the opportunities which challenge us now to win whole nations, we must not be blind to the fact that there is still work which remains to be *begun*, as well as work which remains to be finished, if the plan of campaign is to be all-inclusive in its scope. There are still many portions of the world and great areas of population without organized missionary effort; where the forces of evil hold their own as securely as if the Saviour had never conquered; where the famine-stricken have never heard of the Bread that came down from Heaven for the heart-hunger of the world; where the darkness of superstition and error has never been illumined by the torch of civilization or the light of the Gospel.

In attempting a survey of these unreached millions a two-fold division of the unoccupied sections of the world-field is natural. First, there are great stretches or areas, countries or provinces, wholly untouched by missionary effort, and not included in any

existing scheme of missionary operations. There are also smaller sections or portions of countries and provinces included sometimes within the scheme of existing missionary operations, but not yet occupied. The former are unoccupied because of special hindrances, difficulties and barriers inherent in the missionary problem of the unoccupied field; the latter are unreached mainly because of lack of money and men, since they are mostly located either adjoining mission fields, or perhaps entirely surrounded by spheres of missionary activity. The latter, although important, are not dealt with in this pamphlet.

It is a fact full of pathos that after all the centuries of missionary effort, what may be called the heart of the two great continents of Asia and Africa must still be classified under the heading of "unoccupied fields." In Central Asia a stretch of country is practically unoccupied whose vastness is literally appalling. "Starting in Manchuria at approximately 125 degrees of east latitude, the Province of Helungkiang contributes 1,500,000 who are without any missionary provision whatever. Moving westward the needs of at least 2,500,000 of nomad Mongols come into view, who live in the desert of Gobi and the stretches of Mongolia. Still westward lies the Chinese province of Sin-kiang, including Chinese Turkistan, Kulja, Zungaria and outer Kan-su, with a population of over 1,000,000. The establishment of three small missionary outposts within this vast

territory at Yarkand, Kashgar and Urumtsi alone prevents its entire inclusion in this vast sweep of unrelieved darkness. Southward, through Kan-su, Tibet is reached. Here there are about 6,000,000 people as yet wholly destitute of missionary ministration. Westward is Afghanistan, with four millions, and north of Afghanistan, Bokhara and Khiva, which, together with the Mohammedans of Russian Turkistan and Russia proper, represent a population of at least 20,000,000, all of them without a missionary."

To a greater degree even than in the case of Asia, the heart of Africa constitutes a vast unoccupied field. "Scattered over a territory of immense area without counting the desert stretches of the Sahara, and fairly unified in its character, there are to be found some 50,000,000 people—almost one-third of the continent—not only unreached but without any existing agency having their evangelization in contemplation as far as actual projected plans and hopes are concerned. This area begins a few hundred miles south of the Mediterranean coast and includes, as we shall see, portions of Tripoli, the Province of Oran, the southern half of Algeria, the Atlast Riff country, the Mulaya Valley, the Sus Valley, and the Sahara district of Morocco; the uncounted thousands of nomads in the Sahara proper; Rio de Oro with a population of 130,000; 8,000,000 in Senegambia and the Niger district; some 1,700,000 in French Guinea;

1,500,000 in Dahomey, some 500,000 in the Ivory Coast, and over 800,000 in Portuguese Guinea; about 1,500,000 pagans in Liberia; 500,000 in Togoland; some 4,700,000 in Northern Nigeria; 3,000,000 in Kamerun; some 8,000,000 in the French Congo, besides 4,000,000 of the Baghirmi and Wadai districts; several millions at least out of the 30,000,000 of the Belgian Congo; a large population in Nyasaland; some 2,500,000 in Portuguese East Africa; about 2,000,000 even yet in Uganda, and 750,000 in the Italian, British and French Somalilands." These figures are still more surprising when we remember that in this summary of unreached sections the boundaries of possible activity on the part of existing missionary agencies have probably been drawn to include as large an area of occupation as possible. The question may be seriously raised, has the Church made more than a beginning in the evangelization of the heart of the Dark Continent?

Because of the new political conditions and the disappearance of barriers, we begin with Central Asia. Here is the roof of the world and the watershed of the largest continent. Here three great religions have struggled for the mastery and one after the other gained supremacy for centuries. Buddhism and Christianity still count their adherents, but Islam has swept the field. More unknown than Central Africa and in some places less thoroughly explored, a vast area of barren deserts and fertile oases, of parched plains and navigable rivers, of perpetual

snow and perpetual drought. Including Afghanistan, Chinese Turkistan, Bokhara, Khiva, Russian Turkistan, and the trans-Caspian province, together with the Steppes, this field has a total area of 2,232,530 square miles, and a population of 16,868,000. This, however, would give a wrong impression of the real density of population. Since the rainfall of Central Asia has decreased so that its rivers fail to reach the sea, far less than a tenth of the total area is permanently habitable. The population, therefore, is comparatively dense in the irrigated oases along the rivers. The chief centers of population, trade and communication are the following cities: Tashkend (155,673), Kokand (81,354), Namangan (62,017), Samarkand (58,194), Andizhan (47,627), Omsk (37,376), Marghelan (36,490), Bokhara (75,000), Karshi (25,000); Hissar (10,000), Khiva (5,000), Osh (34,157), Semipalatinsk (36,040).

The Orenburg-Tashkend Railway is of the very greatest significance for the economic and missionary future of this vast unoccupied area. The fact that even before the war there were 3,202 miles of railway in actual operation is a startling evidence of the progress of the march of civilization in this part of the world and a challenge to missions. From St. Petersburg to Orenburg there are 1,230 miles of railway and from Orenburg to Tashkend 1,174 miles. From Tashkend steel rails stretch to Merv (603

miles), and from Merv ever southward to Kushkinski (195 miles), the furthest military outpost of Russia toward India, leaving a gap of less than five hundred miles to New Chaman and the railway system of the Northwest provinces. In addition to this railway system there is a regular steamboat service on the Oxus River. All of this region faces a new day because of necessary readjustments following the Peace Conference.

In the very heart of Asia and perched between the two highest mountain chains of the world, the Kwen-lun and the Himalayas, lie the highlands of Tibet with an area of 463,200 square miles and a population estimated by some as high as 6,500,000 and by others at less than 4,000,000. This fascinating country, bleak, mountainous and guarded at every entrance, has resisted missionary effort for many decades. "The jealous apprehensions of the Chinese Government," wrote Sven Hedin, "the religious fanaticism of the Tibetans and the wild nature of their country—these are the factors which have kept Tibet in isolation longer than any other country in Asia." Do these still obtain?

Immediately south of Tibet there are two other independent kingdoms in the Himalayas, both still unoccupied territory. Nepal has a total area of 54,000 square miles, and a population estimated at about 5,000,000; while Bhutan, bounded on the south by

Assam and on the north by Tibet, has a population estimated at present to be at least 300,000.

Another more important area is Indo-China, consisting of the five states of Annam, Cambodia, Cochin-China, Tonking and Laos. The shape of the country is like a big capital J, of which Tonking forms the head, Cochin-China and Cambodia the left curve and Annam the stem. These five states have a combined area of 256,000 square miles, and a population of about 18,230,000. Annam is the largest in area and has a population of 6,000,000; Cambodia has 1,500,000; and Cochin-China nearly 3,000,000. The country has been fairly explored and developed under the French government. The oldest railway runs from Saigon, the capital of Cochin-China, to Mytho, and the total length of railway is over 1,900 miles. Besides the work of Roman Catholic Missions, only one Protestant Mission has workers in all this region.

In the eastern half of the island of Sumatra, together with the islands of Banka and Billiton, there is a population of over 3,200,000 untouched by missionary effort.

The central and western parts of the island of Borneo are also unoccupied, and 400,000 souls are destitute of Christian workers. The population is mostly pagan, but is in danger of becoming Moslem, and the occupation of the field is therefore urgent.

Madura Island, northeast of Java, together with Sumbawa, Flores, Timor, Bali and Lombok Islands,

seem small on the map, but reveal a population of over 2,000,000 who are without any Christian missionary. Baron van Boetzelaar writes: "Once their occupation was interdicted by the Dutch Government because a missionary was murdered there, but now it is probable the government would offer no objection to any mission that would occupy the islands." The religion of Bali and part of Lombok is Hinduism; the other part of Lombok is Mohammedan. No translations of the Bible appear in their languages.

The same authority describes the whole central and southern part of Celebes, stretching from Posso Lake to the extreme south, as at present wholly unoccupied. This part of the island contains a population of perhaps 200,000. The island of Ceram in the Moluccas has no Protestant mission station. In Northern and Central Papua, or New Guinea, the main approach to which is the Fly River, there is an unknown population wholly unreached.

In Southern Asia there are still other regions into which no Christian influence has yet penetrated. In the Malay Peninsula, the districts of Kedah, Trengganu and Kelantan have recently come under the British flag, yet the entire population of perhaps 1,000,000 souls are untouched by Christian missions.

Arabia, the cradle of Islam, is still a challenge to Christendom. The present missionary force is wholly limited to the East coast and the vicinity of Aden. There are only five points on a coast of 4,000 miles

where there are resident missionaries. There is not a single mission station far inland. The only part that is fairly well occupied is the river country, including the two provinces of Bagdad and Busrah. Hejaz, the "Holy Land" on the west, with Mecca and Medina, has no missionary; and Hadramaut, one of the widest regions untouched by missionary effort and stretching for 1,200 miles from Aden to Muscat, with a population of perhaps half a million souls, is without missions. The eastern tribes of this large province are pagan rather than Moslem. Their dialect is distinct from the Arabic spoken elsewhere; their customs are peculiar and primitive.

Crossing the Red Sea, we find in Africa several large unoccupied regions. One of the most important of these, because of its vast extent, its location and its strategy, is the Sudan. It is a land of varied races and of a multitude of tongues and peoples, stretching across a span exceeding that from San Francisco to New York. The total population of the Sudan, estimated at no less than 40,000,000, has been scarcely touched by missionary effort.

In Northern Nigeria there is an empire larger in area than all Japan and inhabited by nations who were armed with guns in battle when our forefathers only knew the use of the bow and arrow, and where the Hausa language, the only native African language with a literature, is spoken. Here a popula-

tion of 4,700,000 is waiting for the Christian message.

There is an estimated population in Abyssinia of 10,000,000. In this independent kingdom the bulk of the people are nominally Christian (Alexandrian and Coptic); there is a considerable Jewish population, but Islam is winning its way, especially in the south. In the entire kingdom there is but one Protestant mission station.

The so-called Ivory Coast, a French colonial possession, with an area of 200,000 square miles and an estimated population of 3,000,000, has no Protestant mission. The ports of this colony are visited by ocean-liners. It is proposed to create a port and railway at Bassam at an expense of about 10,000,000 francs. The works are in progress, and a railway is being pushed inland. Telegraph lines connect the principal towns and extend to adjoining colonies. Yet, with all this material progress, French Guinea and Portuguese Guinea, with the coast of Senegambia, have no Protestant missions. The latter has a population of 820,000; the former of over 2,000,000.

North Africa is nominally an occupied mission field, and yet work was only begun in the Barbary States within the last thirty years, and is represented today by a few isolated stations and at most a handful of workers in the largest centers. Southern Tripoli and the district of Oran in Algeria are practically unoccupied, as there is only one station in each,

and Morocco, south and east of the Atlas Range, is almost wholly an uncultivated area. The lower half of Tunis has no mission station. The station furthest south is at Kairwan, a city with thirty mosques and a great center for pilgrimage. From Kairwan one could travel directly southeast for *two thousand two hundred miles* before reaching Upòto on the Congo. And this is the nearest mission station in that direction! Could any statement give a clearer idea of the vast areas in the Dark Continent that still await the light of the Gospel?

What, we may well ask, are the reasons for this long neglect of vast areas and needy millions? Doubtless there have been physical obstacles due to lands unexplored, and climates deadly, and hardships of travel or conditions and environment that endanger life.

David Livingstone's famous saying is still true. "The end of the geographical feat is the beginning of the missionary enterprise." Some imagine that the day of geographical discovery is already drawing to its close and that no part of the globe, except the polar regions, remains where exploration is needed. The fact, however, is that both in Asia and in Africa, there are still large regions not only untouched by missionary effort but that have never been explored or mapped by the pioneer traveler.

"It is true that Africa is no longer the Dark Continent," says Hogarth, "but it is guarding jealously at

this moment some very dark spots. Even in British territory, how much is known of the inner Shilluk districts of the Sudan, or the region between the upper waters of the Blue Nile and the limits of Uganda, and who has followed Rohlfs down the line of Senussi oases from Tripoli or the Cyrenaica towards Wadai?"

Not to speak of portions of Central Borneo, British and Dutch New Guinea, or the Territory of Papua, as it is now designated, and the unexplored portions of Northern Siberia, important geographical problems await solution in Western and Central Asia. The largest unexplored area in Asia and perhaps in the world is in southeastern Arabia. It is a fact that we have better maps of the moon than of this part of the world. All the lunar mountains, plains and craters are mapped and named, and astronomers are almost as familiar with Copernicus and Eratosthenes (16,000 feet high) as geographers are with Vesuvius or the Matterhorn. But from certain scientific points of view hardly anything of the Arabian peninsula is known. Not an hundredth part has been mathematically surveyed, and for knowledge of the interior we depend almost wholly on the testimony of less than a score of travelers who paid a big price to penetrate the neglected peninsula.

Those who expect to occupy these lands must be willing to endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ, and need the same patience, persistence, energy and

hopefulness which characterized explorers like Sven Hedin, while he was trying to fill up the blank spaces on the map of Central Asia, or Livingstone those in Central Africa. The terrors of the desert—thirst, loneliness and other perils.

Before the present war political hindrances were also a large factor in preventing the occupation of parts of Africa and Asia. We may thank God that one of the results of the war has been to remove international jealousies and suspicion, to disarm prejudice against Protestant missions, and especially to destroy forever the fear of Pan-Islamism. It was due to the latter that the British and French Governments often favored Moslem propagandism and hindered Christian missions or even prohibited them in the Sudan, Nigeria and elsewhere.

The restrictions to Protestant work in Russia have, we trust, also disappeared in the revolution; and when Central Asia needs reconstruction with what was formerly the Ottoman Empire the work of the missionary will be appreciated as essential and beneficent for civilization.

A new day has dawned for all of western Asia. The gates of brass are opening and the bars of iron have been cut asunder. When the Amir of Nejd invites Dr. Paul Harrison, a medical missionary, to come to his capital, when democracy has become the ideal of Asiatics and international rivalries are to be held in check, through a League of Nations, we may

boldly speak of missions even to the Hejaz and to Afghanistan.

With the building of the Hejaz Railway, which has already reached Medina from Damascus, it is only a question of time before the blast of the locomotive will be heard within the precincts of the Kaaba. There will be a branch line to Jedda, and it is possible that the day may not be far distant when travelers may visit the sacred cities of the Moslem world with impunity.

Long neglect, trying climates, political barriers, national jealousies and religious intolerance in all the unoccupied fields are only a challenge to faith and intended of God to lead us to prayer. All difficulties can be surmounted by those who have faith in God. The kingdoms and the governments of this world have frontiers which must not be crossed, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ knows no frontier. It never has been kept within bounds. It is a message for the whole race, and the very fact that there are millions of souls who have never heard the message becomes the strongest of reasons why we must carry it to them. Every year we hear of further advance into regions of the world by merchants, by travelers, and by men of science. If they can open a way for themselves, in spite of all these difficulties, shall the ambassadors of the Cross shrink back?

The unoccupied fields of the world in all their wide extent, with their vast populations and the stupen-

dous difficulties that face those who would enter them, present a social problem of immense magnitude. Within the lands and areas of this survey is the largest aggregate of the three classes which form the social problem in all great cities, the defectives, the delinquents and the dependents. A map showing the illiteracy of the world today bears a striking resemblance to a map of the unoccupied fields. In most of the unoccupied fields of the world, less than ten per cent. of the people are able to read and write their own names; in some of them they have not even an alphabet, in others no literature.

The great cities of these lands suffer horrors of insanitation. Conditions in Lhasa are indescribable. Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, has no drainage nor sanitation of any description. The water-supply of the city is full of impurity, and one stream serves as sewer and water-main for the people. Cholera and other epidemics necessarily follow, and periodically carry off thousands of the inhabitants.

Summing up the present social conditions in the areas outside of missionary effort, it is evident that the universal ignorance, the appalling illiteracy, the degrading superstitions, the unspeakable immoralities, the hideous persecutions and tortures prevalent in these lands, and the pitiful condition of womanhood and childhood are the strongest possible plea for Christian missions. There is no hope in the shallow and mistaken cry "civilization first, and Chris-

tianity afterwards." It is a watchword without promise and without power. Civilization, without evangelization, introduces more evils into the non-Christian world than existed before its arrival. Jesus Christ is the only hope of social salvation. The fundamental test of personal religion and of national religion was given by our Lord Jesus Christ: "By their fruits ye shall know them." By that test, the religious condition of today of all the unoccupied fields of the world is no less needy and full of pathos than their social condition. Their spiritual degradation and destitution is their highest appeal for help.

In the study of comparative religion, one fact has never been sufficiently emphasized: *The non-Christian religions have all had their trial in the lands which we call "unoccupied fields of the world" unhindered, undisputed and without Christianity as a rival or aggressor for centuries.* How far have they tended to uplift society, to develop civilization, to transform character and bring peace to the soul? Have these religions themselves, in their long history, and in their full possession of lands and lives, developed or deteriorated? If the light that is in them has become darkness, how great is that darkness?

Has Animism in Africa and Malaysia, or Shamanism in Siberia, grown richer, fuller, nobler, by a process of evolution? Have Buddhism and Lamaism become better or worse, while in the course of centuries they dominated thought and life in Annam and Tibet

undisputed? What has Islam added to its original stock of ideas, either in Arabia or Afghanistan, to prove that the course of its development is upward and onward?

It is literally true even for the present life, that the only hope for these countries is in the Gospel. Their condition is not different from that which once obtained in mission fields then unoccupied, where now the true Light shines and where within a single generation, not by process of gradual evolution, but by the supernatural power of the Gospel, the environment has been utterly changed, the whole social and moral life uplifted to a higher plane, and tens of thousands of lives transformed and transfigured into noble character. When will the good news come to these also?

Do we realize that the peoples and tribes of the unoccupied fields of the world are still living in the era B. C.? They have a right to the Gospel in the year of our Lord 1919—*our* Lord who said: "Go ye into all the world." If He were with us on earth, would He not go to them first? Why should not we?

"The eyes of the Christian world," said a missionary to Tibet, "turn as instinctively toward the lands closed to the Gospel in this missionary age, as do the eyes of a conquering army toward the few remaining outposts of the enemy which withstand the victors and hinder complete victory, without which the Commander-in-Chief is unable to close the campaign."

In entering the unoccupied fields, we know that we are entering the King's own country. We cannot win the world for Christ. He won it for Himself by His incarnation, and paid for it by His death. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

More than that. In some countries, His name is now unknown where once He was acknowledged and worshipped. This is true of Central Asia, of Arabia and of North Africa. In Africa the forces have assembled for the great conflict between the Cross and the Crescent, *and the unoccupied fields are the battle-ground*. It is true that the population of Africa is comparatively small when we think of India or China, but no one acquainted with its history and observant of its resources can doubt that under more settled and propitious conditions, the population will increase enormously. It is among the mass of dark, illiterate and degraded pagans, as well as among the semi-civilized peoples of the north, already Moslem, that the battle with Islam is to be fought. At present, Islam is conquering and nothing can stay its onward march or redeem Africa from its grasp but the carrying of the Gospel of Christ at once into every part of the unoccupied territory. Islam robbed of all it once held dear as political prestige and humbled by defeat and division may now attempt to retrieve its losses in the war by a new spiritual campaign in Africa. Shall we not challenge the issue? .

The pioneer missionary is a soldier and must be

willing gladly to "partake of the sufferings of Christ." Missions mean warfare. Should, then, soldiers of the Cross shrink from undertaking, on behalf of Christ, what was being done every day during the late war?

"The sand of the desert is sodden red—

Red with the wreck of a square that broke;
The gatling's jammed,
And the colonel's dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke;

"The river of death has brimmed its banks,

And England's far, and honor's a name;
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks—
Play up, play up,
And play the game."

"The Evangelization of the World in this Generation" is the summons of Jesus Christ to every one of the disciples to lay himself upon a cross, himself to walk in the footsteps of Him, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, himself to count his life as of no account, that he may spend it as Christ spent His for the redemption of the world. Who will do *this* for the unoccupied fields?

The Student Volunteers of today must not rest satisfied until the Watchword, peculiarly their own, finds practical application for the most neglected and difficult fields, as well as in countries where the harvest is

ripe and the call is for reapers in ever increasing numbers. The plea of destitution is even stronger than that of opportunity. Opportunism is not the last word in missions. The open door *beckons*; the closed door *challenges* him who has a right to enter. The unoccupied fields of the world have therefore a claim of peculiar weight and urgency. "In this twentieth century of Christian history, there should be no unoccupied fields. The Church is bound to remedy the lamentable condition with the least possible delay."

The unoccupied fields, therefore, are a challenge to all whose lives are unoccupied by that which is highest and best; whose lives are occupied only with the weak things or the base things that do not count. There are eyes that have never been illumined by a great vision, minds that have never been gripped by an unselfish thought, hearts that have never thrilled with passion for another's wrong, and hands that have never grown weary or strong in lifting a great burden. To such the knowledge of these Christless millions in lands yet unoccupied should come like a new call from Macedonia, and a startling vision of God's will for them. As Bishop Brent remarks, "We never know what measure of moral capacity is at our disposal until we try to express it in action. An adventure of some proportions is not uncommonly all that a young man needs to determine and fix his manhood's powers." Is there a more heroic test for

the powers of manhood than pioneer work in the mission field? Here is opportunity for those who at home may never find elbow-room for their latent capacities, who may never find adequate scope elsewhere for all the powers of their minds and their souls. There are hundreds of Christian college men who expect to spend life in practicing law or in some trade for a livelihood, yet who have strength and talent enough to enter these unoccupied fields. There are young doctors who might gather around them in some new mission station thousands of those "who suffer the horrors of heathenism and Islam" and lift their burden of pain, but who now confine their efforts to some "pent-up Utica" where the healing art is subject to the law of competition and is measured too often merely in terms of a cash-book and ledger. They are making a living; they might be making a life.

There is no way to make human life so long in its influence, so broad in its contact with other lives, so deep in its convictions and motives, so high in its ideals and aspirations as by laying it on the altar of missions. And there never was a day of God so crammed with opportunity and so clamant with urgency as our own day. The Master's word was "Occupy till I come." Dare we leave these fields unoccupied?

